

**University Neighborhood Greenway  
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)****Rev. March 2013**

The city is seeking input on proposed safety improvements to create a neighborhood greenway along 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE between NE Ravenna Boulevard and NE Campus Parkway with the ultimate goal of creating a greenway network. Have questions on what this might mean? Keep reading.

**1. What is a neighborhood greenway?**

On streets with low vehicle speeds and low vehicle volumes, a neighborhood greenway can:

- Improve safety
- Help people cross busy streets
- Discourage cut-thru traffic
- Protect the residential character of our neighborhoods
- Keep speeds low
- Get people to where they want to go like parks, schools, shops and restaurants

Safer, calmer residential streets are achieved by using some combination of the following:

- Signs and [bicycle sharrow markings](#)
- Sidewalk and pavement repairs
- Intersection medians
- Flashing beacons
- Bicycle parking
- Traffic signals
- Speed humps
- Curb ramps

Neighborhood greenways are not car free zones, do not add bike lanes and there are minimal if any on-street parking impacts.

**2. How can I get involved and participate in the development of a University Greenway?**

SDOT's approach to neighborhood greenway projects is to actively involve residents and the broader community from the start. We hold two public meetings, talk with stakeholders and offer to attend community meetings. The initial open house is an opportunity for all residents and businesses to participate and provide input about the challenges they face when traveling around the neighborhood, where auto use is low and where they want to walk or ride a bike more. Feedback helps shape the design proposal that is shared at a second open house. The first Open House was held on November 20, 2013. Materials are posted on the web site at



[www.seattle.gov/transportation/12thavegreenway.htm](http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/12thavegreenway.htm). Please attend our 6PM, March 20 meeting at University Christian Church, 4731 15th Ave. NE to learn more about proposed traffic safety improvements.

Additionally, we want to more clearly convey what a neighborhood greenway is. Neighborhood greenways are new in Seattle. We have completed a few in [Wedgwood](#), [Ballard](#), [Greenwood](#), [Delridge](#) and [Beacon Hill](#). Because they are new, we are working on ways to better demonstrate what we are proposing and how it can enhance your street and make you, your family and neighbors safer.

3. What outreach has been done?

SDOT has met, or talked with, representatives from the University of Washington, Sound Transit, King County Metro, Community Transit, Seattle Parks and Recreation, Seattle Department of Planning and Development, Seattle Neighborhood Greenways Community Coalition and community members to understand what projects are underway and what plans have been developed. SDOT has collected traffic data for Roosevelt Way NE, 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, Brooklyn Avenue NE and University Way NE to understand which streets might best meet criteria for a neighborhood greenway.

4. Will you add a bike lane and will it take away on-street parking?

Bike lanes are not a part of neighborhood greenways. A greenway route in the U District neighborhood would function just like the street currently does—a street where people driving and riding a bike share the same road; as well as people walking. Changes would include signs and [bicycle sharrow markings](#) on the street that indicate the street is a designated greenway route. On-street parking usually stays the same. However, stop signs could be added on the streets crossing it. As at all stop signs in Seattle, to ensure pedestrian and stop sign visibility, there is no parking within 30 feet of the sign.

5. Are you putting a traffic signal in at NE 50<sup>th</sup> Street and 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE?

Yes. SDOT recently received a grant to install a new traffic signal at 12th Avenue NE and NE 50th Street. The signal will include pedestrian pushbuttons and bicycle detection to make it easier and safer for people to cross the intersection. Left turns from NE 50<sup>th</sup> Street onto 12<sup>th</sup> Ave NE will not be permitted in order to help traffic flow better on NE 50<sup>th</sup> Street and discourage additional cut-through traffic along 12<sup>th</sup> Ave NE. Installation is scheduled for 2014.

The alley in-between 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> avenues NE and NE 50<sup>th</sup> and 52<sup>nd</sup> streets will be converted to one-way southbound. This change will help improve safety and maintain access to the destinations north of NE 50th Street.

6. How would bicyclists and pedestrians cross Ravenna Boulevard at 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE?

SDOT and Seattle Parks Department are working together on a potential future connection across the Ravenna Boulevard median to connect the buffered bike lane on westbound Ravenna Boulevard with 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. Pedestrians can cross Ravenna Boulevard at the existing signals at 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE or at the all-way stop at Brooklyn Avenue NE.

7. What other changes are you proposing?

- Reducing the speed from 25MPH to 20MPH
- Building a new sidewalk on the south side of Ravenna Boulevard between 12<sup>th</sup> Ave NE and Brooklyn Ave NE
- Adding stop signs to east-west streets crossing 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue
- Adding all-way stops at NE 43<sup>rd</sup> St and NE 47<sup>th</sup> St
- Installing wayfinding signs to help get people where they want to go
- Adding bicycle pavement markings known as 'sharrows' to help guide people riding bikes and alert drivers to share the road
- Making pavement and sidewalk repairs

8. How does this project fit in with the University Station Sound Transit is constructing?

SDOT is working with Sound Transit to understand how traffic will move during construction and after the new light rail station opens. During construction and after, a neighborhood greenway would encourage more people to walk and bike to their destinations, including the light rail station.

9. What is happening at Campus Parkway and 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE where the University of Washington is constructing Maple and Terry Halls?

The University of Washington started construction on the Maple and Terry Halls. The design considers connections to Central Campus, the University District and the Burke-Gilman Trail. One prominent feature is the creation of a pedestrian corridor between Maple and Terry Halls, which will also function as an open space for social gatherings and community and campus events. This corridor will link to Lincoln Way and 40th Avenue NE on the south side and 12th Avenue and NE

Campus Parkway on the north. Although it includes stairs, runnels will be available to help people with bikes move through the area. Crossing improvements, including crosswalks on the east and west sides of 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and ADA-accessible curb ramps, will also be added to Campus Parkway making it safer and easier to cross.

10. What's the [U District Partnership](#)?

The [U District Partnership](#) is a community-led planning effort, funded by the City's "Only in Seattle" grant program. Participants include residents, business owners, UW, social service providers, property owners, and the faith community. The partnership includes working groups on public safety, business development, urban design, marketing, and neighborhood leadership. City planners are coordinating closely with this group to make sure our work complements the work going on in the broader community.

11. What's the [U District Urban Design Framework](#)?

The Urban Design Framework (UDF) is a conceptual plan that will guide the City's work on Neighborhood Plan updates, zoning changes, streetscape design work, design guidelines, and capital projects. It was developed through a year of community workshops and other public events. The UDF includes guiding principles and recommendations about public space, street improvements, housing choices, and urban form.

12. Can you build a neighborhood greenway on 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE? There are bus layovers and more than 1,500 vehicles south of NE 50<sup>th</sup> Street.

Neighborhood greenways work best on low volume, low speed streets. Traffic volumes on 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE are above 1,500 vehicles a day south of NE 50<sup>th</sup> Street. North of NE 50<sup>th</sup> Street, traffic volumes on 12<sup>th</sup> Ave NE are between 250 and 700 vehicles a day. Relative to other parallel routes, 12<sup>th</sup> Ave NE has between 60 and 90 percent less vehicle traffic, making it an attractive neighborhood greenway candidate.

To accommodate transit service in the neighborhood, bus and trolley layover spots along 12<sup>th</sup> Ave NE will not be removed.

13. Will a neighborhood greenway decrease the number of cars driving on other streets?

Neighborhood greenways do not decrease the current number of cars traveling on the street. Rather they help ensure that those that do are moving at a safer, calmer pace.

14. Our streets already feel safe. How would a greenway help?

There's growing evidence that residents in neighborhoods with slower streets are more likely to take ownership of those streets and in so doing increase the surveillance that is key to deterring crime. Criminals will find a fast, unpleasant street lined with garage doors an easier target than a slow, quiet street watched over by neighbors walking and biking along the street. Motorists traveling at slower speeds are more aware of their surroundings and help deter crime and prevent crashes. Greenways can be especially beneficial for families, children and seniors who might find these routes more comfortable than busier nearby streets.

15. Will it be hard to see people on bikes when we use our driveways?

The good news is that as bicycling increases, drivers become more accustomed to seeing them. Residents pulling out of their driveways need to pay attention and expect to see pedestrians and bicyclists, just as they currently do. Pedestrians and people riding bikes along the greenway also must pay attention, because there is always a likelihood they could encounter a vehicle pulling out of a driveway.

16. How many more people will be bicycling on my street?

It is impossible to know for sure, however, SDOT expects more people to use a street than currently do if it becomes a neighborhood greenway. It will not become a major bicycle thoroughfare like the Burke-Gilman Trail, but rather a neighborhood amenity primarily used by those who live nearby.

17. How does the greenway help seniors and people with disabilities?

The main purpose of neighborhood greenways is to provide people of all ages and abilities a safe place to travel. We understand that some people have restricted mobility and are not able to walk along the greenway, but they will still experience the benefits of a quieter, calm street.

18. What does this greenway add for walkers that they don't have already?

One of the great things about the U District is that there is a complete sidewalk network. Other proposed neighborhood greenways in Seattle do not have this. We would make other improvements that should make it even easier and safer to walk, including crossing improvements at the major streets like the traffic signal with a pedestrian push button going in at NE 50<sup>th</sup> Street and 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, marking crosswalks and installing curb ramps.

19. Won't adding east-west stop signs make the north-south neighborhood greenway more appealing to cars?

Adding stop signs means drivers have to stop before turning onto or crossing the greenway making it safer and providing priority for walkers and bicyclists. 12<sup>th</sup> Ave NE is an attractive greenway because traffic speeds along 12<sup>th</sup> Ave NE are already very slow, with 85 percent of drivers going 21 mph or less. The narrow road and parking on one or both sides of the street help keep vehicles going slowly and deters high-speed, cut-through traffic from using 12<sup>th</sup> Ave NE. To ensure this trend continues, SDOT will measure speeds and volumes along the greenway and other parallel routes one year after implementation to evaluate the performance of the greenway.

20. Will SDOT install stop signs at traffic circles?

Traffic circles on their own do not require a driver to stop, so the stop signs require drivers to stop before they enter the greenway, helping them to notice pedestrians and people biking. In addition to the stop signs, we also install stop bars and a "no parking within thirty feet" sign so the stop sign and stopping location is clear. Drivers approaching an intersection with a traffic circle and a stop sign must stop before entering the intersection, just as they would at other intersections with stop signs. We do not remove existing traffic circles as they continue to calm traffic traveling along the neighborhood greenway. Neighborhood greenways are built for all ages and abilities, and our goal is to make the street safer for our most vulnerable populations. When we do that, then the street is safer for all.

21. Will the neighborhood greenway impact the existing Restricted Parking Zone?

No. The existing Restricted Parking Zone on 12th Avenue NE from NE 50th Street to NE Ravenna Pkwy will not be affected by the 12<sup>th</sup> Ave NE neighborhood greenway. Curb space is part of the public street system, a public good available for all people to use. To restrict the use of curb space for some requires a compelling reason. The Restricted Parking Zone (RPZ) Program was created to help ease parking congestion in residential neighborhoods, while balancing the needs of all people to be able to use the public streets. RPZs help neighborhoods deal with the impacts through signed time limits from which vehicles displaying a valid RPZ permit are exempt.

22. What effect does a greenway have on property values and crime rates?

The value of a property is a function of many attributes including but not limited to house and lot size, age of the structure, school and tax districts, proximity to desirable and undesirable amenities, views from the property, noise and pollution levels, interest rates, month and year of sale, as well as

socio-economic elements such as characteristics of neighboring structures, residents and streets. Because there are so many variables that determine the value of a given property at a given moment in time, it is challenging to make an “apples-to-apples” comparison of two streets where the only difference is the presence of a neighborhood greenway. This is particularly difficult given the relative newness of greenways (or bike boulevards as they are called in some cities) in the United States. There is not a lot of existing data that measures all of these changes after a street becomes a greenway. In Beacon Hill and Ballard real estate brochures have promoted that homes for sale are located on a neighborhood greenway.

According to researchers studying the links between property values and the environmental changes that take place after a greenway is built (including decreased traffic volumes, less noise, and having more transportation choices) it appears that the overall effect is a positive one. More information on existing research is [available](#) from the [Transportation Research Board](#).

23. We already have a lot of bike lanes, how about spending the project money to fix potholes?

Not everyone can drive and yet almost everyone pays sales taxes and property taxes. These taxes all contribute to funding transportation so it is important to deliver a safe, reliable, efficient and socially equitable transportation system that gives people travel options. One way to do that is to make walking and riding a bike more convenient. When one person chooses to walk instead of drive it means more space on the roads for those who are driving. It also means less damage to roads, reducing the need to fix potholes.

24. Is it possible to change street classifications (e.g. arterial to non-arterial)?

Arterial streets serve an important function in our street system and are used daily by general traffic, freight, transit, and emergency vehicles, as well as by pedestrians and people on bicycles. Arterials are used for through trips as well as to access local destinations and are intended to carry higher traffic volumes and operate at higher speeds than non-arterial streets.

It is very rare for the city to change a street from an arterial to a non-arterial (or vice versa). Some of the things we would consider in deciding whether to change an arterial to a non-arterial would include:

- intended purpose of the street
- access to and effect on adjacent land uses
- availability, suitability and capacity of alternate arterial routes

- likelihood of spill-over traffic on adjacent non-arterials
- current and desired traffic speeds and volumes (just changing the classification of a street won't make traffic go away or slow down – engineering changes would likely also be needed)
- characteristics of the street like number of lanes, lane widths, signalization, speed limit.